

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 01056 140857Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 /072 W

-----140907Z 039535 /12

R 140825Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8189

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1056

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, TH

SUBJECT: THAI LABOR LEADERS' VIEWS ON THE LABOR SITUATION IN
THAILAND

1. DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS, EMBOFFS MET WITH MOST OF THE
PROMINENT THAI LABOR LEADERS. THEIR UNANIMOUS OPINION IS THAT
THE OUTLOOK FOR ORGANIZED LABOR UNDER THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS
NOT SANGUINE. MOST BELIEVE THEIR PHONES ARE TAPPED; SOME SAID
THAT THE POLICE HAVE THEIR OFFICES UNDER SURVEILLANCE AND
INTERROGATE THEM PERIODICALLY. MANY PROFESS FEAR THAT THEY
MAY BE ARRESTED AT ANY TIME.

2. THE TANIN GOVERNMENT APPEARS AT BEST TO TOLERATE THE
UNIONS. IN SOME INSTANCES IT IS OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO MAKE LIFE
DIFFICULT FOR THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME LABOR LEADERS HAVE BEEN
ATTEMPTING TO FORM A NATIONAL LABOR COUNCIL AS PROVIDED IN
ORDER NUMBER 46 OF THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM COUNCIL
(NARC). ALTHOUGH THE ORDER ALLOWS 15 OR MORE UNIONS TO BAND
TOGETHER TO FORM A COUNCIL TO PROMOTE LABOR EDUCATION AND
IMPROVE LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS, THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER
UNIONS ARE REQUIRED TO VOTE ON MEMBERSHIP AT A GENERAL MEETING
OF EACH UNION BEFORE LABOR DEPARTMENT (DOL) APPROVAL WILL BE
GRANTED. TO DATE, VERY FEW UNIONS HAVE RECEIVED POLICE
PERMISSION TO HOLD GENERAL MEETINGS. THE ONLY COUNCIL WHICH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 01056 140857Z

IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE APPROVAL IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IS THAT
HEADED BY BOONRAWD BREWERY WORKERS UNION PRESIDENT THANONG
THAOWANIT AND METAL WORKERS PRESIDENT FAN WONGDI. (IT SHOULD
BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THESE TWO MEN ARE THE MOST QUOTE PRO-
GOVERNMENT UNQUOTE OF ANY OF THE IMPORTANT LABOR LEADERS AND
PAN IS THE ONLY LABOR LEADER TO HAVE BEEN APPOINTED A MEMBER
OF THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM ASSEMBLY (NARA). THE

PRESIDENT OF THE EXPRESS TRANSPORT ORGANIZATION WORKERS UNION, SUNTHOEN KEOWNET, DERISIVELY LABELED THE THANONG-PAN GROUPING THE QUOTE OCTOBER 6 COUNCIL UNQUOTE BECAUSE OF ITS CONNECTION WITH THE MILITARY SUPPORTERS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT).

3. OF THE 19 LABOR FIGURES ARRESTED AFTER OCTOBER 6 AS QUOTE PERSONS DETRIMENTAL TO SOCIETY, UNQUOTE AT LEAST NINE REMAIN IN CUSTODY. APPARENTLY THEY MAY BE VISITED IN JAIL BUT NONE OF THE PEOPLE WITH WHOM EMBOFFS SPOKE HAD ANY IDEA IF OR WHEN THE DETAINEES WOULD BE FREED. MOREOVER, THIS SUBJECT ALMOST INVARIABLY PROMPTED A COMMENT FROM THE UNION OFFICIAL ADDRESSED THAT HE TOO MIGHT BE ARRESTED AT ANY MINUTE. SUCH FEARS MAY NOT BE WELL-FOUNDED BUT THEY ARE NONETHELESS VERY REAL.

4. LABOR LEADERS ALSO FEEL THAT THE DOL NO LONGER CARES ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF THE LABORER IN THAILAND. SUWIT YING-WORAPHAN, THE NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE DOL, HAS EFFECTIVELY CLOSED HIS DOOR TO LABOR UNION REPRESENTATIVES. ALL APPOINTMENTS WITH HIM MUST NOW BE MADE THROUGH THE LABOR RELATIONS DIVISION RATHER THAN THROUGH THE DG'S OFFICE, AS WAS THE CASE WITH THE PREVIOUS DG. ALL LABOR LEGISLATION IS PRESENTLY UNDER REVIEW BY A COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF BUSINESS LEADERS AND DOL OFFICIALS, WITH A VIEW TOWARD REVISING THE LAWS TO IMPROVE THE INVESTMENT PICTURE. NO UNION LEADERS HAVE BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE.

5. COMMENT: LABOR IS BEING PROGRESSIVELY ALIENATED FROM THE RTG. MANY UNIONS HAVE DECIDED TO OPERATE SURREPTITIOUSLY RATHER THAN REQUEST APPROVAL FOR UNION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 01056 140857Z

MEETINGS. WORK SLOWDOWNS HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED IN SOME PLANTS AND IF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IS REPRESSED, MORE OVERT REACTION WILL SURELY FOLLOW EVENTUALLY. THE SITUATION COULD EASILY DETERIORATE TO THE POINT WHERE THE THAI LABOR FORCE WILL BECOME A FRUITFUL TARGET FOR COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA. IT IS A PROBLEM WHICH THE RTG WOULD DO WELL TO HEED.
WHITEHOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 14-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANGKO01056
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770014-0578
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770153/aaaabvt.tel
Line Count: 104
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fafc04da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3601347
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THAI LABOR LEADERS' VIEWS ON THE LABOR SITUATION IN THAILAND
TAGS: ELAB, TH, (THANONG THAOWANIT), (FAN WONGDI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fafc04da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009